In the claims: The claims are as follows.

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus for use in providing user inputs to a communication or computing device, comprising:

an input button provided as a flattened shape lying in or on and nearly flush with a surface of the communication or computing device so as to have an exposed surface and having a ~~cavity or~~ receptacle formed on the exposed surface for receiving an end portion of an indicator instrument ~~unattached to the input button, and for receiving a force exerted on the input button via the indicator instrument~~; and

means disposed proximate to the receptacle for detecting ~~the~~ a force exerted on the input button via the indicator instrument based on the input button moving or deforming in response to the force, and for providing a signal corresponding to the force, said means comprising motion or strain sensors disposed on opposite sides of the input button and configured to detect a rotational force.

~~2. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the means for detecting the force exerted on the input button comprises a strain sensor.~~2. Canceled.

3. (Currently amended) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the means for detecting the force exerted on the input button comprises a sensor array that transmits a signal corresponding to the force at least in respect to the direction of the force.

4. (Currently amended) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the means for detecting the force exerted on the input button comprises a sensor array that transmits a signal corresponding to the force at least in respect to the magnitude of the force.

5. (Currently amended) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the means for detecting the force exerted on the input button comprises a sensor array that transmits a signal until the force is removed.

6. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the input button moves or deforms so as to communicate to the means for detecting the force exerted on the input button a signal corresponding to a user action selected from the set consisting of clicking, scrolling, selecting, pointing, cursor positioning, key pressing or typing, and joystick manipulating.

7. (Currently amended) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the input button is provided so as to move or deform ~~moves or deforms so as to communicate~~ in response to a force lying along the surface of the communication or computing device.

8. (Currently amended) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the input button is provided so as to move or deform in response to ~~moves or deforms so as to communicate~~ a force directed orthogonally to the surface of the communication or computing device.

9. (Currently amended) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the input button is so shaped as to allow imparting a rotational force ~~couple~~ via the indicator instrument and so tending to cause a change in pitch of the input button relative to the surface of the communication or computing device, and wherein the input button moves or deforms ~~so as to communicate~~ in response to the rotational force ~~couple~~.

10. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the input button and means for detecting the force exerted on the input button are in combination provided as a box-in-box

construction including an outer box and an inner box, the inner box provided as the flattened shape having the indention formed on the exposed surface, and the outer box having sensing means responsive to forces applied to the inner box via the end portion of the indicator instrument, for providing a corresponding signal indicating a user input.

11. (Currently amended) A method for acquiring user inputs to a communication or computing device, comprising:

~~a receptacle of an input button lying in or on a surface of the communication or computing device~~ receiving an end portion of an indicator instrument in a receptacle of an input button lying in or on a surface of the communication or computing device~~unattached to the input button~~, wherein the input button is a flattened shape lying in or on and nearly flush with a surface of the communication or computing device so as to have an exposed surface and having ~~a cavity or~~ the receptacle formed on the exposed surface for receiving the end portion of the indicator instrument, and wherein the input button moves or deforms in response to forces exerted on the input button via the end portion of the indicator instrument; and

providing a signal indicative of rotation using motion or strain sensors disposed on opposite sides of the input button and configured to detect a rotational force applied to the input button via the indicator instrument~~the input button moving or deforming in response to a force or a force couple exerted on the input button via the end portion of the indicator instrument~~.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, ~~wherein the moving or deforming of the input button is~~ further comprising providing a signal indicative of a sliding motion of the input button.

13. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the moving or deforming of the input button ~~is~~ includes a rocking motion ~~caused by applying a force couple to the input button via the indicator instrument~~.

14. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, ~~wherein the moving or deforming of the input button is~~ further comprising providing a signal indicative of a motion of the input button into or out of the surface of the communication or computing device.

15. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, ~~wherein the moving or deforming of the input button is~~ further comprising providing a signal indicative of a motion of the input button substantially in the plane of the surface of the communication or computing device.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the indicator instrument is used to provide user inputs that would otherwise be provided using a keyboard.

17. (Currently amended) An apparatus as in claim 10, wherein the inner box is so shaped as to allow imparting a rotational force ~~couple~~ via the indicator instrument and so tending to cause a change in pitch of the input button relative to the surface of the communication or computing device, and wherein the sensing means are for providing a signal indicative of the rotational force ~~couple~~.

18. (Previously presented) A communication or computing device comprising an apparatus as in claim 1, and further comprising the indicator instrument and an indicator holder for storing the indicator when the indicator is not in use, wherein the indicator holder is attached to the side of the communication or computing

device or integrated into a cover for the communication or computing device, and is shaped so as to allow snapping to a holding position when the indicator is pressed onto the holder.

19. (Currently amended) An apparatus for use in providing user inputs to a communication or computing device, comprising:

an input button provided as a flattened shape lying in or on and nearly flush with a surface of the communication or computing device so as to have an exposed surface and having a ~~cavity or~~ receptacle formed on the exposed surface for receiving an end portion of an indicator instrument unattached to the input button, and for receiving a force exerted on the input button via the indicator instrument; and

a sensor array disposed proximate to the receptacle for detecting the force exerted on the input button based on the input button moving or deforming in response to the force, and for providing a signal corresponding to the force, said sensor array comprising motion or strain sensors disposed on opposite sides of the input button and configured to detect a force couple applied to the indicator instrument tending to cause a rotation of the indicator instrument.

20. ~~(Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 19, wherein the sensor array comprises a plurality of strain sensors.~~Canceled.